

So This is Christmas?

by Skyrocket

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Continuity Note: This story is set after Generation X #49.

Christmas in New England. The thing of postcards and Norman Rockwell paintings. The snow covers everything in an endless white blanket that seems to go on forever. Of course, Minnesota looks almost exactly the same this time of year, but it doesn't have the same feeling as New England does. It's just way too cold. Plus, Norman Rockwell never lived there.

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Xavier School for Gifted Youngsters

Snow Valley, Massachusetts

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house, quite a few creatures were stirring. Creatures who collectively went by the name Generation X.

Gathered in the living room of the school's main building three of said aforementioned creatures were busy putting up a Christmas tree. The first, a girl with a peaches-and-cream complexion and flaxen hair stood on a step ladder applying tinsel to the tree. The second, a petite Asian girl, was critiquing the work of the first girl. The

third, a lanky African-American boy with cheery air about him, was opening a large box of ornaments.

"No, no, Guthrie, that's too much tinsel!" shouted Jubilee. "If you put all that on we won't be able to see that lights!"

"Quit exaggerating, Lee," sighed Husk. "There's plenty of room on the tree for both the tinsel and the lights."

"Paige, I'm telling you th--"

"She's right, Jubes, there's plenty of room," interrupted Synch as he dug through the ornaments. "Say, what color of bulbs should we use? Red or white?"

"Red," said Husk.

"White," countered Jubilee.

Everett sighed as the two glared at each other.

"Hey, guys. What are you doing?" came a new voice. The kids turned to see the most recent addition to Generation X, the pink-haired and enigmatic Gaia, enter the living room.

"Hey, Gaia," grinned Synch. Behind him Jubilee bristled slightly. "We were just decorating the Christmas tree. Want to help?"

"Sure!"

"Great. Grab some ornaments and start putting them on the tree," Husk said as she applied more tinsel.

"Hey, who put this Captain Picard ornament on here?!" shouted Jubilee as the decorating resumed.

"I did," answered Synch.

"I never would have pegged you as a Trekkie, Ev."

"Live long and prosper, Lee," imitated Synch as he made the Vulcan greeting sign with his hand. "Oh, and it's Trekker, not Trekkie."

"Do you guys mind if I ask you guys something?" asked Gaia as she added a candycane to one of the lower branches.

"Sure," nodded Paige.

"Exactly what is this Christmas thing you've been going on about?"

The three other members of GenX exchanged surprised looks.

"Uhâ€¦"

"Wellâ€¦"

"You seeâ€¦"

"Thanks, guys. That really clears things up," sighed Gaia.

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Jonothon Starsmore sat in his room, oblivious to the Yuletide crisis in the living room. He had other things on his mind. His musings, however, were interrupted by a knock on the door.

[Door's open.]

"Hey, Jono," greeted Skin as he entered. "Sean sent me up to tell you that dinner's going to be an hour or so late tonight."

[So? I've got no mouth, remember?]

"Actually, no, I'd forgotten," replied Angelo sarcastically. "I think he kinda wants you to be there. It's Christmas Eve, you know. Team bonding and all that Hallmark crap."

[Tell Sean I'm not in the holiday spirit.]

"What's your problem, Mr. Grinch? All the Whos down in Whoville finally wise up and buy home security systems?"

[Almost funny. Now would you leave me alone?]

"No way," declared Skin. "You're depressed, even for you. Come on, tell me what's bugging you."

[It wouldn't help.]

"You don't know that. A couple of bright, good lookin' guys like ourselves, if we put our heads together there's nothing we can't tackle."

[All right. You know how crazy things have been around here lately. I mean, it's Christmas Eve and we're just now getting the tree up. An you remember how we all had to do all our shopping that one-day we went into Boston?]

"Yeah, go on."

[Well, with Paige being in Kentucky with her family--]

"Ese, you didn't?!" gasped Angelo.

[I didn't,] admitted Chamber, his head slumping in despair. [I didn't get her anything.]

"That was way stupid, Jono."

[I know that now! But I didn't know what to get! I figured since she was going to be back home for a while I'd have plenty of time to think of something for her when she came back. But then her mum's health improved and she came back early and I di--]

"Whoa, whoa. Calm down," said Skin. "Look, we'll figure something out, okay?"

[It's Christmas eve! All the stores must be closed by this time of day! What am I going to do?!]

"You can take a sedative for starters. Now come on, let's put our heads together and think."

With that, the two young mutants began to try and think of a solution. It was going to be a long evening.

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Outside Monet St. Croix was looking for something. Someone to be more accurate. The tracks she had found earlier were quickly bringing her closer to her target. At last M saw her, laying on her back in the snow, her arms and legs pumping rhythmically. "Hello, sisters. What is that you are doing?" she asked.

M's sisters, the amalgamated being known as Penance, leapt up from the snow to display their handwork. "A snow angel," assessed M. "How veryâ€¦cute. Jubilee taught you this, didn't she?" Penance nodded in affirmation. "Not exactly behavior befitting a St. Croix, but I think I'll let it slide this time. Speaking of our family, I got you this."

It was then that M drew an apple from the pocket of her jacket. "I know it's not much, but girls with razor sharp skin are rather difficult to shop for. Believe me, I know. That's why I got you this. When I was trapped in that form apples wereâ€¦a small connection to the life I once led."

Penance carefully took the apple from his sister's hand and began to munch. "I hope it helps to ease what you are going through right now, sisters," said Monet

Penance quickly downed the apple and then moved to a new patch of snow. She then flopped down, spread-eagle and looked at M.

"No," declared the other girl. "Such a thing is unbecoming someone of my station. That's why I gave you your gift now. It would not do forâ€¦outsiders to be a part of our family's precious moments."

Penance gave her sister a sad look. After several long moments Monet sighed. "Oh, very well. If it will make you happy." The red-skinned mutant was all smiles as she and her sister made snow angels side by side.

"I hope Jubilee never finds out about this," muttered M.

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"Okay, there's still some stuff I don't get. First, what's frankincense?" asked Gaia. "Also, who's this David guy and how did he come to own a star? And how did a virgin get to be preg--"

"I told you we should have stuck with the secular approach, Paige," interrupted Jubilee. Husk shot her a dirty look.

"And what's the deal with this Santa Claus guy?" continued Gaia. "How does he make all these toys he gives away? And how does he get into homes all over the world in one night? Is he a mutant? And how do the reind--"

"Santa Claus a mutant," chuckled Jubilee. "That's a good one."

"Hey, stranger things have happened," shrugged Synch.

"Like what?"

"Three words, Lee: Elwood the Pooka."

"Ev, don't you ever get tired of being smart?" muttered the ex-mallrat.

"Nope."

"Gaia, I don't understand how you couldn't at least have some idea about Christmas," said Paige. "I mean, it's been all over the TV and you did go Christmas shopping with the others at the mall. Didn't you notice the decorations?"

"I'd never been to a mall before," explained the girl from another dimension. "How was I supposed to know that's not how it always looked?"

"She's got a point," conceded Synch.

"Okay," continued Husk "I can understand that. But didn't you realize they were getting gifts for other people?"

"Jubilee said that the mall was a place where people went to buy things they wanted. When I saw all of you buying stuff I figured you were getting them for yourselves."

"Way to show the holiday sprit, Jubes," chided Synch.

"Hey, you try explaining what a mall is to someone who's never been to one!" flared the pyrotechnic mutant.

"Look, this Christmas thing is giving me a headache," sighed Gaia as she stood and headed for the kitchen. "Maybe it'll all make sense tomorrow." The rest of GenX were silent as she left the room.

"You know, sometimes I forget just how different from us she is," whispered Husk. "I mean, being chained to a rock your whole lifeâ€¦"

"Yeah, but not having at least some idea of what Christmas is about, that just seems wrong," commented Everett. "Wrong and sad. We have to find some way to make her understand."

"I'm with you, Ev. But I think we should keep this between the three of us," said Jubilee. "No sense in bringing the others' holiday cheer down."

"But how do we make her understand?" queried Husk.

"When I figure it out you'll be the first one I call, Guthrie."

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"Maybe you could give Paige some of your CD's," suggested Skin.

[Somehow I don't think our musical tastes areâ€|compatible.]

"Maybe you're right," agreed Skin as he flipped through his teammate's CD rack. "Stabbing Westward, the Cure, Nine Inch Nails, Black Sabbath. The Dream Academy? Who the hell are they? Jeez, haven't you got any happy music?"

[Sure, there's a Backstreet Boys album right by the Verve Pipe CD.]

Not realizing his friend was joking, Skin actually looked. "Not funny, man. Do you want me to help or not?"

[No, I'm grateful you're here. It's justâ€|Look, this problem is my fault. I appreciate you trying to help butâ€|]

"But what?" quizzed Skin.

[I'm the one who hasâ€|feelings for Paige. I'm the one that didn't get her a gift. I should be the one who figures out what to do about this.]

The two young men stared at each other for a long moment. "You're a good guy, Jono," said Skin after a while. With that, he headed for the door. "I'm sure you'll come up with something great. And if you need helpâ€|"

[I know whom to come to. Thanks, Ang.]

"No problem."

Alone again, the British boy returned to his thoughts. [Think, Starsmore. Think!]

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Several hours laterâ€|.

"Artie and Leech are asleep. Finally," reported Husk as she walked into the living room.

"Great. Does that mean we're the only ones still up?" asked Jubilee.

"Yeah," confirmed Synch. "M, Gaia and Angelo went to bed a little while ago and Ms. Frost said she was going to go 'curl up with a good book'. Sean is in his office having a little Christmas cheer, Jono hasn't left his room all day, and Penanceâ€|well, she's wherever she goes this time of night."

"So does anyone have any ideas on how to get Gaia to understand Christmas?" asked Jubilee. The others just shook their heads. "Me

neither. Bummer."

An hour or so passed and several ideas come up but they were all shot down for one reason or another. Eventually, the young mutants drifted into silence.

"Maybe we're going at this the wrong way," commented Synch suddenly.

"What do you mean?" said Husk.

"Well Paige, Christmas isn't something you can just **\*\*make\*\*** someone understand. It's not just gifts, or family, or religion, or whatever. It's something else. It's aâ€|spirit."

"Hence the name 'Christmas spirit', Ev," interjected Jubilee. "But how do we get Gaia to understand what that is?"

"I don't think we can," answered Synch.

"What?!"

"What he's saying is that Christmas isn't like a word in a dictionary," began Paige "There's no one definition of it. It's an idea. A feeling. Something that comes from within. You just can't make someone **\*\*feel\*\*** something."

"So you're saying that we should give up?"

"No, Jubes, that's not what we're saying at all," assured Everett. "What Paige is getting at is than we can't just force the holidays down Gaia's throat. We just have to step back andâ€|hope the spirit of Christmas comes though."

"Ev, that was 100% U.S.D.A approved cornball," muttered Jubilee.

"Cornball or not, it's all I can think to do," said the male mutant as he stood, stretched and headed toward his room. "Goodnight."

"Ev's right, Jubes," stated Husk. "You can't make someone feel the holiday sprit. I think I'm going to turn in to."

Left alone, Jubilee began to stare long and hard at the Christmas tree. "There has to be a way. There has to be a way." After another forty minutes of racking her brain Jubilee decided to call it quits.

"Humbug!" grumbled the mutant as she headed for her room.

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The next morning

"Sean, if you're planning on asking me to marry you, I'm afraid you're in for a disappointment," said the White Queen as she looked at the jewelry box in Banshee's hand.

Around the room Generation X tried to stifle their laughter but failed. "Don't be daft, woman!" snorted Sean. "It's nae an engagement ring!"

"Get a sense of humor, Sean. It's Christmas afte--" Emma Frost stopped in mid-sentence as she saw what was in the box. It was a silver pendant in the shape of the X-Men's symbol. "Sean, Iâ€|Iâ€|"

"A little something to remind ye of the dream, Emma," grinned the Irishman. "Of the better world the X-Men are trying to build, and yer important part in that dream."

"Thank you, Sean," said Emma as she secured the pendant around her neck. "This is the most thoughtful gift I've ever received. Now, I have a present for you."

She handed him a small package wrapped in green paper which Banshee quickly opened. "A cell phone, Emma? Not that I'm ungrateful but I already--"

"Push the redial button, Sean."

Still confused, Sean did so. After the redial tone and one ring the call was answered. "Hello, Da?" said a voice with a proud Irish accent.

"Theresa?!"

"Merry Christmas, Da!" greeted the young woman know as Syrin. "Sorry I haven't called before, but things with X-Force have been real crazy lately."

"I know the feeling," sighed Sean. "Dear, hang on for just a moment." The former X-Man turned and smiled at the co-instructor. "Thank ye, Emma. From the bottom of me heart, thank ye."

"Happy holidays, Sean," smiled the White Queen. "Now maybe you should go talk to your daughter in private." With a quick nod Banshee headed for his office.

"Wow, his daughter," whispered Gaia.

"Okay, who's next?" asked Skin.

"Artie and Leech," answered Husk as she pulled two presents wrapped in red and gold paper from under the tree. Quickly the two youngest members of the group dove onto their presents.

"Wow! This is best present Leech has ever gotten!" beamed the ex-Morlok. Artie concurred by creating a psi-hologram of a smiley face. In their hands they help miniature versions of Generation X's red and yellow uniforms.

"Remarkable craftsmanship," commented M. Beside her Penance nodded in concurrence.

"I made those while I was back home," explained Husk. "My momma was even able to help me out a little once she got to feeling better."

Still grinning at his new gift, Artie created an image of him and Leech clad in their new uniforms, standing triumphantly over a battered and bruised Apocalypse.

"That's right, guys! You'll show those badguys who's boss!" cheered Jubilee.

"Thank you, Husk! Artie and Leech promise to be best X-Men ever!" smiled the green mutant he and his friend ran to give Paige a hug. Artie echoed that sentiment by creating an image of Husk's face surrounded by a giant heart.

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"I don't think I've ever seen anyone smile like that," thought Gaia as she watched her teammates embrace.

"Shucks, guys, it was nothing. I'm sure you'll do those uniforms proud," smiled the Kentucky girl.

[I guess it's my turn then.]

Paige looked up from Artie and Leech to see Chamber standing beside her. From behind his back he pulled an expensive looking electric guitar.

"Jono, you're giving me your guitar?! I can't take this!"

[I'm not giving you the instrument, luv. I'm giving you the music.]

"Ah don't understand," said Husk.

[Paige, I'll be honest with you. With you coming here so suddenly I didn't have time to get you a gift. Not one from a store, anyway. So this is all I can give you. For the rest of the day name any song you want and I'll play it. I know it's much butâ€¦]

For a long moment Paige just stared at the British mutant. Then she leapt up and gave him the largest hug of his life. "Thank you, Jono. This is the sweetest gift I've ever gotten!"

"You're a genius, Starsmore. A freakin' genius," thought Skin as he gave his friend a quick thumbs-up. Chamber nodded slightly in response as he hugged Paige.

"I get it. Now I get it!" whispered Gaia.

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A few hours laterâ€¦

"Hey, Everett. Where's everyone?" asked Gaia as she walked into the living room.

"They're outside making snow mutants with Artie and Leech. Even Ms. Frost," answered Synch from the couch.

"Snow mutants?"

"Jubilee's new name for snowmen."

"Ah. So why aren't you out there with them?" quizzed the young girl.

"I was going to go but then I found out It's a Wonderful Life was going to be on TV. It just doesn't seem like Christmas if I don't watch it and now is the first chance I've had."

"Cool. Look, I know I might be a little late with this but I got you a gift," said Gaia as she handed Synch a small box wrapped in blue paper.

"Wow, Gaia, you, uh, didn't have to get me anything," Everett fumbled as he open the box. "We all understand how you're not from around here and--" He stopped short when he opened the box and discovered a Holly flower.

"A plastic flower. Uh, thanks. I sure didn't have one of thes--"

"It's mistletoe, silly!" giggled Gaia.

"Uh, no, this is Holly. Mistletoe looks lik--"

"Ev, isn't this the time of year when people say 'It's the thought that counts?'" asked the pink-haired girl.

"Well, yeah, I guess so."

"Great, then Merry Christmas!" grinned Gaia. She then held the 'mistletoe' over Synch's head kissed him on the cheek.

"Uh, wow! But I, uh, thought you, you know, didn't get Christmas," stammered the young man.

"I didn't. Not until we started opening presents. When I saw how people reacted to what they had been givenâ€|"

"There's more to Christmas than presents," interrupted Everett.

"Now I know that," Gaia began. "It took me a while, but now I understand. It's not about gifts, faith, or whatever. That's part of it, but not everything. The point of Christmas is reminding the people in your life that you care about them. Right?"

"You got it!" beamed Synch. "That's what the Christmas spirit is all about."

"Kewl!"

"Uh, Gaia?"

"Yeah?"

"Would you, uh, like to watch It's a Wonderful Life with me?"

"Just try and stop me!" said Gaia. "Now scoot over and pass the

popcorn!"

Synch happily complied.

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Outside the Massachusetts Academy the air was tinged with laughter and snowballs. A group of people hated a feared by the world just for being different, for a few brief moments, were a Norman Rockwell painting. And inside two teenagers watched George Bailey realize that life really was worth living. On this most special day of the year, for the members of Generation X, it truly was a wonderful life.

End  
file.